

# Learning to Hunt

Hosting a hunting-  
based outdoor skills  
event in your  
community



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Hosting a hunting-based outdoor skills event in your community



Discover the goals, steps and formats of running a **Learn to Hunt Outdoor Skills Clinic** in your community.



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## Program Goals

Hosting a **Learn to Hunt Outdoor Skills Clinic** in your community will:

inspire youth to take up the proud tradition of hunting.

provide youth with an opportunity to experience hunting-related activities under the guidance of experienced hunters.

encourage youth to get involved with wildlife conservation projects.

provide an opportunity for hunters to share their knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm with local youth.

provide a positive image of hunters helping youth in their local community.

focus attention on the important role hunters play in wildlife conservation.

encourage positive mass media coverage of hunting.







## Planning a Learn to Hunt Outdoor Skills Clinic

Decide you want to host a **Learn to Hunt Outdoor Skills Clinic** in your local community.

At least six months prior to your planned event, sit down with other members of your local hunting club or wildlife conservation organization, review this book and do a little brainstorming.

Gain majority commitment from your group to host a **Learn to Hunt Outdoor Skills Clinic**.

Form a committee. Look for people who are committed to working hard for the sake of the kids in your community. Select one person to act as general coordinator for the entire event. Select other committee members who will coordinate the advertising, donations, registration, finance, exhibits, food, and the activities.

Select a format for your **Learn to Hunt Outdoor Skills Clinic** that suits your organization's and facility's needs (see the following section for a description of each format).

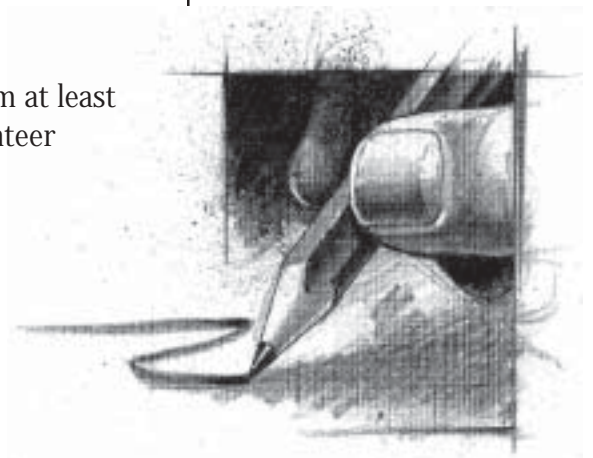
Use this book of ideas to help generate a list of teaching stations for the event.

Look upon your event as a cooperative effort. Contact your local conservation warden, wildlife manager, other local hunting clubs and request their advice and assistance for the day's event.

Select a date to host your **Learn to Hunt Outdoor Skills Clinic**. Take into account the time needed for planning, finding volunteer instructors, advertising and setting up the event. Also take into account the schedules of your local youth and their parents. This varies with each season.

Contact your group's insurance company to gain the proper liability coverage for the event. Many national outdoor-related organizations have group insurance coverage. Cost-sharing may be available from your state's conservation agency.

Gain commitment from at least two or three volunteer





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instructors to teach each activity. Club members, Hunter Education Instructors, park naturalists, conservation wardens and wildlife biologists are all possible resources. Have one individual for each station act as a standby in event of sickness of the others.

Locate a site for conducting your

**Learn to Hunt Outdoor Skills Clinic.** Possible sites include: your local rod and gun club, a member's farm, a scout camp, DNR wildlife management area or state forest. Depending on the activities you include in your **Learn to Hunt Outdoor Skills Clinic** you should look for a facility that has:

*A large field for activities*

*A variety of habitats including forest, field and pond or stream*

*A shooting range for .22 rifle and 20 gauge shotgun activities*

*An adequate area for parking*

Be sure to visit this site personally and obtain written permission from the site owner to host the event.

Ask each volunteer instructor to gather the necessary equipment for teaching his or her selected activity stations and to be responsible for setting up and taking down that station. Leave ample time prior to the event for those stations that require more complex setups (such as those requiring setup of an archery range or deer stands).

Keep safety in the forefront of your mind when you set up the teaching stations. Make certain that concurrent teaching stations are adequately isolated from each other to avoid noise conflict. Be sure that firearm and archery ranges are positioned with safety in mind.

Create a poster or flier announcing your **Learn to Hunt Outdoor Skills Clinic**. You have the permission to use any of the artwork in this manual to produce your posters or fliers for your local event.

The committee member responsible for publicity should obtain permission from local grocery stores, sporting goods stores, discount stores, hardware stores, gas stations, restaurants, schools, churches, libraries, and malls to post your promotional fliers in their windows.





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Modify the press release in Appendix I and mail it and a flier or poster to all your local newspapers, radio stations and TV stations one month prior to your event. Follow this with another mailing two weeks before your Learn to Hunt Outdoor Skills Clinic.

Decide if you need to pre-register participants (this will depend upon the format you select for your event). If you decide to pre-register here's a suggestion:

After your event has been adequately publicized, parents wishing to register their children may call a selected phone number (the committee member in charge of registration, club house phone, answering machine) and provide their name and address. The committee member in charge of registration will send a registration packet to the parents with the following information:

*Information sheet about your event and what is expected of the participants*

*Parental consent form*

*Registration form asking for participant's age, experience, interest, T-shirt size, etc.*

*Self-addressed stamped return envelope*

*Directions to the event*

Make arrangements for toilet facilities, water, lunch or snacks and beverages, door prizes, certificates, stickers, patches, hats, etc. for participants.

Call a meeting of all volunteer instructors about one week prior to the event. Walk through the teaching stations and have each station instructor explain to the other instructors what will happen at that station. Review the animal rights-related information in Appendix II and III with all volunteers. Wrap up any last minute details. Call for replacements for anyone who cannot attend due to illness or family matters.

Have your "standby" list of volunteer instructors ready throughout the week in case an instructor needs to be replaced.

One week before your event, make a phone call to your media contacts and personally invite them to attend your event. Invite them to walk with one or committee members throughout the grounds to photograph and videotape the activities.





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Notify your local warden, police department and Emergency Medical Service about your event so they can be on standby in the event of an emergency.

Request that all volunteer instructors arrive at least one to three hours prior to the start of the event, depending upon the amount of time needed to set up their station.

Provide a list of emergency phone numbers (nearest hospital, sheriff's department, fire department, EMS) to each volunteer and show everyone where the nearest phone is. If the site is remote, make arrangements with someone to have a cellular telephone on hand for emergencies.

Make last-minute calls for replacements for volunteers who do not show.

Develop and print maps of the area, indicating location of each teaching station.

If you are hosting a more formal instructional format as opposed to the less formal festival format, place participants in groups of 5 to 10 (no more than 10 participants per group) and assign them to a volunteer guide.

For the more formal, structured events, encourage instructors to begin each session on time. A creative way of announcing the beginning and end of events is to invite a local muzzleloader enthusiast to fire a blank round when each instructional period is finished or begins. Provide about 5-10 minutes for groups to circulate from one station to the next.

Don't forget to thank the donors and workers. Create a banner or a board with all the donors names on it so that everyone can see who helped make the event happen.

Above all, keep a smile on your face and have a great day!



## Hosting an Outdoor Skills Clinic in Your Community

Hold a wrap-up meeting within two weeks after your event. Send thank-you letters to all who helped make the event a success, return equipment, pay bills and discuss next year's events. Let everyone provide his or her own critique of the day so that next year's event will be even better.



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## Formatting a Learn to Hunt Outdoor Skills Clinic

Learn to Hunt Outdoor Skills Clinics can be conducted in a variety of ways. As an instructor and a participant, I have been involved in at least seven different formats of clinics. You and your host group need to read through the following formats, consider their advantages and disadvantages and then select the format that best suits your needs.

### Formal Field Day

You will need to secure a large field, park or farm to conduct this one-day event. Select about 6 to 8 activity stations. Divide the day into time slots of about 30 to 60 minutes each. Limit group size to about 8 to 10 participants per activity station. Groups rotate from one station to the next. Participants are expected to attend each activity station and stay for the entire day's event. A pre-registration process is necessary.

#### Advantages:

- Small groups allow for better interaction with the instructor and more hands-on experiences.
- Instructors can begin and end at a designated time, and have the full attention of a group of participants.
- Every instructor interacts with every participant.

#### Disadvantages:

- Instructors have to repeat their program 6 to 8 times.
- Participants are required to participate in the entire event and attend one station to the next, even if they aren't interested in a particular topic.
- Time constraints mean that fewer activity stations can be offered.
- In order to cover all the activity stations described in this book, your organization would have to host successive field day events.





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## Free Choice Field Day

You will need to find a large field area such as a park or farm. Select 10 or more activity stations. Divide the day into time slots about 30 to 60 minutes long. Limit group size to 8 or 10 participants per activity. Participants sign up for one activity per time slot and must stay the duration for each activity. Participants go from one activity station to the next according to their schedule they selected. There can be more activity stations than time slots available. Pre-registration is suggested.

### Advantages:

- a. Participants can choose which activity stations to attend.
- b. Instructors can teach a group of participants for a given period of time; and instruction can be more formal, and more hands-on.

- c. Having fewer activity stations than the Skills Day Festival format means that coordinating volunteer instructors and setting up booths is less complicated.

### Disadvantages:

- a. Having more stations than the Formal Field Day event means that coordination is more complicated because more volunteer instructors need to be found.
- b. Participants may be disappointed that they cannot attend every activity.





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### Skills Day Festival

You will need to find a large field location (park or local farm). Select 10 to 25 activity stations. The event lasts a single day. Participation is by open invitation and unlimited. Participants can come at any time during the event and visit any booths that attract their attention.

#### Advantages:

- a. Many activity stations can be offered.
- b. Many participants can be accommodated
- c. Participants have the freedom to select which stations they visit.



#### Disadvantages:

- a. Because participants arrive and depart at will, formal instruction is limited. Each activity can generally be conducted only in a question and answer format or as a brief demonstration.
- b. Instructors have no control over how many people come to their station, or when they come. Participants can walk in at anytime and disrupt a conversation already in progress. Interruptions can be expected and instructors may have to repeat their information many times.
- c. Not much time is available for in-depth teaching and hands-on activities.
- d. Having more stations than the Formal Field Day format means that the event is more complicated to coordinate. More volunteer instructors must be found to teach each station.





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## Instructional Clinic

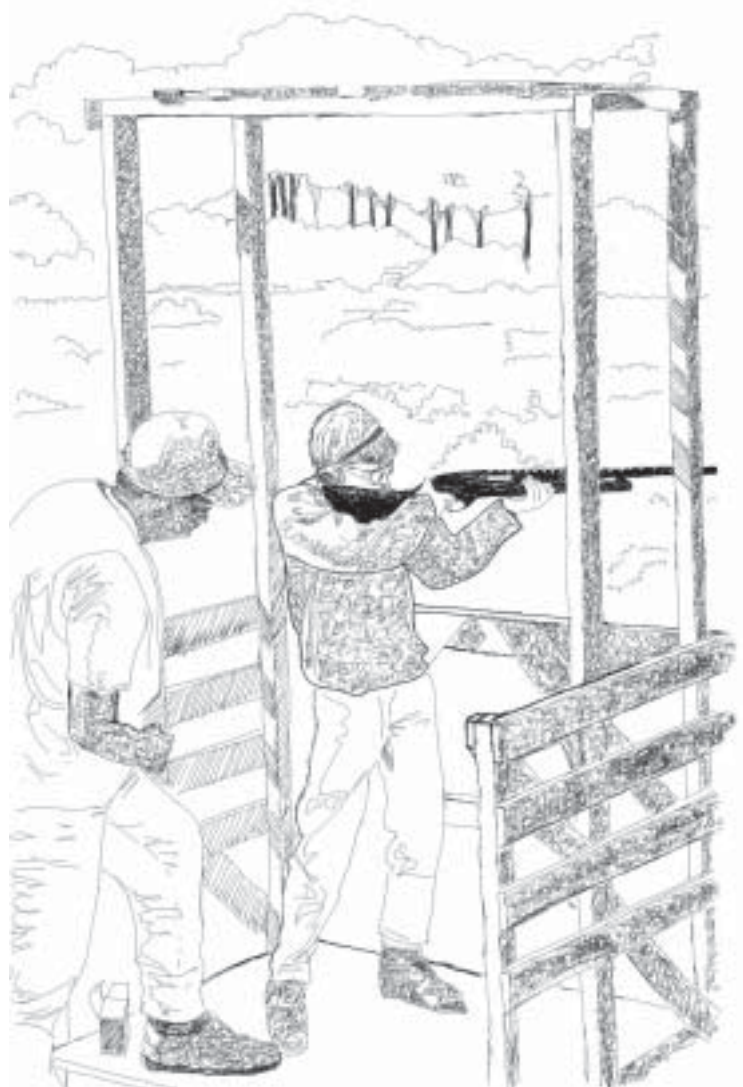
Instead of offering many stations on a variety of topics, this format focuses on one broad, related topic (e.g., turkey hunting skills, deer hunting skills or waterfowl hunting skills). You will need a small site (park amphitheater, barn, classroom or outdoor site) for this event. This type of program generally lasts 4 to 6 hours. Select different instructors to discuss different aspects of the topic (e.g., for a waterfowl hunting skills clinic you may cover such topics as waterfowl ecology, decoying, duck calling, hunting with dogs, shotgun techniques, hunter ethics). Pre-registration is suggested.

### Advantages:

- a. The limited topic calls for a limited number of instructors. Therefore coordinating the event is less complicated than with the formats just described.
- b. Participants receive in-depth instruction on one topic, rather than a brief introduction to a number of different topics.

### Disadvantages:

- a. The event may not reach as large an audience as the other formats because the potential participants may have little or no interest in the topic selected.
- b. The range of topics is limited.





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## Outdoor Skills Demonstration Day

You will need to find a small site (park amphitheater, barn, classroom or outdoor site). Select 6 or 8 activity topics. Invite different guest speakers or volunteer instructors to cover the various topics. Each program lasts 30 to 60 minutes. Each activity is taught in the same location but at a different, sequential time. Enrollment may be limited and may require pre-registration.

### Advantages:

- a. Participants can choose the topics they are interested in and the times they would like to attend. They can attend for an hour or for the entire day.
- b. This type of event can be held on sites with limited space.

### Disadvantages:

- a. Potentially large crowds can show up at any given time to learn about a given topic.
- b. If the location is the same for each speaker, time needs to be allowed for each speaker to set up and then pack up his or her equipment.
- c. Activities requiring special setup such as trees for mounting tree stands or water for launching canoes may not be able to be performed adequately.

